



HIGH REPRESENTATIVE
OF THE UNION FOR
FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND
SECURITY POLICY

Brussels, 9.9.2015
JOIN(2015) 40 final

**JOINT COMMUNICATION TO THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE
COUNCIL**

Addressing the Refugee Crisis in Europe: The Role of EU External Action

Addressing the Refugee Crisis in Europe: The Role of EU External Action

I. The current refugee crisis and its international context

The European Union (EU) is facing the largest refugee crisis since the end of World War II. The current situation has to be seen in a broader context of violent conflict and destabilisation in other parts of the world. It is a crisis of unprecedented magnitude that largely originates from conflicts and persecutions in Europe's wider neighbourhood. The violent conflicts in Syria and Iraq or instability and poverty in parts of Africa have forced millions of women, men and children to flee their homeland in search of protection and a decent life, including to the European Union.

The European Union is stepping up its response to this crisis based on the principles of solidarity and responsibility and in full respect of its values and international obligations. Since the beginning of 2015, the EU has reoriented and mobilised all its external action instruments to respond to the refugee crisis with three objectives: saving lives, ensuring protection of those in need and managing borders and mobility.

Migratory flows increased substantially in 2014, notably through the **Central Mediterranean route**. The year 2015 has seen so far a further dramatic aggravation of the situation. The numbers of those crossing into the European Union through what is called the **Eastern Mediterranean route** amount to 182,740¹, an enormous increase in comparison to 2014. Migrants move into the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia and then onwards into Hungary and other European Union Member States along the so-called **Western Balkan route**. By August 2015, 142,649 irregular entries had been registered in Hungary through this route.

While the composition of migration flows is mixed, there is an exponential increase in the number of persons seeking international protection, **notably from Syria, Iraq and Afghanistan**. In fact, 90% of those using the Eastern Mediterranean route are nationals from one of these three countries. Irregular migrants using the Central Mediterranean route come mostly from Sub-Saharan Africa, and they often also come from conflict areas: approximately 20% are from Eritrea, 12% from Somalia, still, 10% are from Syria. This route has changed composition in comparison to 2014, when it was used by most Syrian refugees. However, it maintains similar volumes of crossings (106,290 until August 2015). The swift changes in the composition of migratory flows and the routes used are an indication of the ability of migrant smugglers to adapt to new circumstances.

While European citizens may perceive the current migratory pressure as dramatic, the European Union is by no means the most affected region in the world. According to the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) the world reached the **highest**

¹ Frontex weekly statistical updates: January – August 2015

number of refugees and displaced persons since World War II in 2014: 59.5 million. More than **85% of these persons live in developing countries**. A very large number of persons are displaced within their own country² and refugees often seek first shelter in neighbouring countries. For example, the largest part of Syrian refugees is hosted by Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey. Most African migrations take place within Africa itself: more than 8.4 million internal migrants in West Africa alone. This shows that the current migration and refugee crisis is not only, nor principally, a European problem. It is a major international challenge. The European Union is at the forefront of international efforts aimed at addressing conflicts and instability and supporting affected populations.

II. The European Union's policy framework and response

Over the last months, EU institutions have mobilised all their efforts to respond to this global crisis. The European Council and the Commission, notably through the **European Agenda on Migration**³ have developed the main elements of the European response to migratory challenges both internally and internationally.

The first priority remains saving the lives of those attempting to cross the Mediterranean in their path towards Europe. But, clearly, protecting people in need, deploying urgent humanitarian assistance, securing access to asylum, and addressing root causes, in particular conflict, political violence, abuse of human rights and poverty, is essential. These objectives must remain at the heart of the European Union's response.

In the face of the current crisis, precedence is being given to actions that have greater immediate impact on migration flows. At the same time, long-term engagement on these matters is necessary to address root causes. The European Union aims to strengthen political dialogue, cooperation, exchange of knowledge and experience with partner countries, civil society organisations and local authorities, in order to support human mobility as a positive element of human development. Cooperation with a rights-based approach encompassing human rights will contribute to address challenges, including South-South migration, and the situation of vulnerable migrants.

The present Communication – part of a broader package of proposals adopted by the European Commission – describes the external action by the European Union to address the refugee crisis. It builds upon a solid structure of international engagement at bilateral, regional and multilateral levels in this field based notably on the 2011 Global Approach to Migration and Mobility.⁴

² Based on the numbers of the UN Internal Displaced Monitoring Centre, the numbers of internally displaced persons in July/August 2015 were the following: Syria (7,600,300); Iraq (3,171,600); Sudan (2,192,830); South Sudan (1,645,392); Pakistan (1,375,900); Nigeria (1,500,000); Somalia (1,133,000); Afghanistan (805,409); Chad (130,000); Cameroon (80,000); Niger (50,000).

³ COM(2015)240

⁴ COM(2011)743

Key financial instruments are being mobilised. With a budget allocation of EUR 96.8 billion for the 2014-2020 period, European Union external cooperation, including development cooperation worldwide, plays an important role in addressing poverty, insecurity, inequality or unemployment. This includes European Union support in areas such as growth and job creation, peace and security, human rights and good governance for regions and countries where refugee flows originate.

In the context of the current crisis and in addition to the Syria Trust Fund, the European Commission is also proposing to EU Member States a new **European Emergency Trust Fund for stability and addressing root causes of irregular migration and displaced persons in Africa**. Trust Funds enable the EU, its Member States and contributing donors to respond to different dimensions of emergency situations by intervening jointly, flexibly and quickly, in response to changing needs. The proposed Trust Fund will support stability, promote resilience, economic development, security, and migration management. It will provide the EU and its Member States with a swift and flexible tool capable of delivering more rapid results. It will assist in leveraging EU support. At the same time it provides a platform for stronger political visibility and will contribute to a more integrated and coherent approach. The Trust Fund is expected to be one concrete deliverable of the Valletta Summit in November 2015. The European Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy expect Member States to consistently and generously contribute to it.

III. Key issues and European Union response

The European Union is active across the world. The following are the most relevant countries and regions for the current crisis:

- **Syria and Iraq**

The EU has been supporting diplomatic initiatives to find political solutions since the beginning of the conflicts in Syria and Iraq. In this context, the Commission and the High Representative have set out the policy framework for a regional strategy, including the fight against Da'esh in a Communication⁵ adopted earlier this year, including financial commitments of EUR 1 billion. **More than 4 million Syrians have fled their country** in addition to the 7.6 million internally displaced and more than 230,000 killed. The **vast majority of Syrian refugees are in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey** and the numbers keep growing, putting enormous political, economic and social pressure on these countries. Since the beginning of 2015, as the neighbours' capacity to accommodate new refugees has reached its limits and border policies have become more restrictive, there has been a sharp increase both in internal displacement and in direct refugee flows to the EU, in particular Greece.

Since 2011, the European Union and its Member States have mobilised over **EUR 3.9 billion** in humanitarian, development, economic and stabilisation funding to address the needs of

⁵ JOIN (2015) 2 final

internally displaced, refugees and host communities in Syria, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon or Turkey. Out of the total contribution, the EU budget has contributed close to EUR 1.8 billion.

An EU Regional Trust Fund in response to the Syrian Crisis⁶ was established to provide a coherent and reinforced response on a regional scale. In addition to support to neighbouring countries hosting refugees, the assistance is also directed to humanitarian, stabilisation and development efforts inside Syria, including reestablishment of local governance and provision of basic services. The Commission calls upon Member States to further contribute to the Trust Fund.

An EU Office in Gaziantep (Southern Turkey) assists in coordinating operations. A **Rapid Reaction Mechanism for cross border operations** in Syria has been created for this purpose. Moreover, the EU also promotes the use of Regional Development and Protection Programmes to support key countries of refuge and/or transit in the Middle East.⁷ Adding a ‘development’ component to previous regional protection programmes, **Regional Development and Protection Programmes are focused on providing protection** to those in need, but also on **enhancing resilience** of refugees, internally displaced persons and host communities, and addressing protracted refugee crises where humanitarian assistance cannot provide a long-term solution.

The EU has commended the enormous efforts undertaken by **Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey** in hosting refugees fleeing the violence in Syria and Iraq and has continued to provide assistance. Substantial projects supporting community centres, food security, livelihoods, schooling and vocational training for refugees in the region are currently financed by the European Union, including EUR 855 million in humanitarian assistance within Syria, but also in Lebanon, Jordan and Turkey.

In **Iraq**, more than 3.1 million persons have become internally displaced after three years of conflict. Although the number of Iraqis seeking international protection in the European Union is still limited compared to Syrians, their number might rise considerably in the near future. In 2015, the European Commission has allocated EUR 65.55 million in humanitarian assistance in response to the Iraq crisis. EU humanitarian aid to the country, including the Kurdistan Region of Iraq, comprises emergency life-saving response to the most vulnerable and medical assistance. The EU is stepping up political and diplomatic work in order to support all the efforts for greater unity and inclusiveness in the country.

- **Turkey**

Turkey is the country that currently hosts as a whole the greatest number of refugees worldwide.

A dedicated dialogue is being opened with **Turkey** to identify ways to support Syrian refugees as well as to enhance border control and fight organised crime responsible for

⁶ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/countries/syria/madad/index_en.htm

⁷ EUR 12 million support

smuggling of irregular migrants. The dialogue with Turkey examines further cooperation to find a solution to the Syrian crisis.

In 2015, funding to Turkey related to the crisis in Syria amounts to EUR 175 million. Funding from the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance⁸ in the area of home affairs is moving up from **EUR 130 million** for the period 2007-2013 to an indicative allocation of **EUR 245 million** for the period 2014-2016. Turkey will also benefit, together with Western Balkan countries, from a new regional migration management programme. EU financial assistance also supports Turkey's efforts to comply with the requirements of the EU-Turkey readmission agreement.

A Frontex Liaison Officer will be deployed to Ankara by the end of the year to enhance operational cooperation. Efforts to swiftly identify and return those who are not in need of international protection will be supported in Turkey as well as in other countries of transit.

Since the beginning of 2014, the European Commission is also carrying out a visa liberalisation dialogue with Turkey. This includes the development of an integrated border management in line with EU policies, in terms of land and sea border security and surveillance and customs' controls enforcement. The dialogue also provides policy guidance aiming to prevent and fight organised crime, terrorism and corruption, enhance judicial cooperation, law enforcement cooperation and personal data protection.

- **Western Balkans**

The European Union has also stepped up its support to non-EU **Western Balkans countries**, which are currently receiving unprecedented refugee flows, primarily from Syria. This includes enhancing reception and asylum processing capabilities, and stepping up cooperation to fight organised crime responsible for migrant smuggling. To this end, the European Commission is finalising a region-wide programme of support for protection and sensitive migration management in the Western Balkans, which will focus on three areas: identification of migrants, intra-regional and interregional information sharing and mechanisms to offer return solutions, while applying practical protection safeguards to reflect specific needs of migrants.⁹

Humanitarian aid of EUR 1.75 million has already been approved for Serbia and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia to provide for the emergency assistance to refugees transiting to Hungary.

In addition to the substantial assistance already provided under the Instrument for Pre-accession in previous years in the areas of border management, migration, asylum and policies, the European Commission is considering further country-specific assistance to strengthen capacities in the area of asylum, migration and visa policy with a view to reinforcing the protection of vulnerable categories of migrants and victims of trafficking in

⁸ Regulation (EU) No 231/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014

⁹ EUR 8 million support

human beings. In the particular case of the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and Serbia, the EU is supporting the long-term development of migration and asylum policy.¹⁰

Operational cooperation among the border guard authorities of the Western Balkans and EU Member States should be further developed. Cooperation could include activities in relation to risk analysis, training, and sharing best practices. Frontex has signed working arrangements and built cooperation with Serbia, Montenegro, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, and stands ready to play an active role in this endeavour.

- **Africa**

Africa, and in particular Sub-Saharan Africa, continues to face demographic pressure, environmental stress, extreme poverty, internal tensions and institutional weaknesses, which in some parts have spilled over into open conflict, increased fragility, displacement, criminality, terrorism and radicalisation, as well as irregular migration and trafficking and smuggling as well as an even greater humanitarian caseload. The European Union is tackling these challenges together with African partners through its regional strategies (Sahel, Horn of Africa, Gulf of Guinea), humanitarian aid, development policy and assistance programmes in the region and through its strong commitment to implement the resilience agenda.

The conflict and the absence of state structures has turned **Libya** into a major crossing point for Sub-Saharan Africans into Europe, and primarily Italy. The European Union is actively **supporting the UN-led dialogue** between Libyan parties in order to reach a peaceful settlement and stands ready to support a future government of national unity. In the meantime, the Commission is providing humanitarian and development assistance to vulnerable migrant population stranded in Libya.

Niger, one of the poorest countries in the world, is the key transit route towards Libya. The European Union is supporting Niger's development, as well as its security.¹¹ In the **Sahel** region, the European Union also supports the political process in **Mali** and the peace agreement with armed groups in the North. This engagement contributes to stability with the training of Malian armed forces and security forces.¹² Further support to border management is being considered. The Union's CSDP missions in Niger and in Mali also contribute to support efforts to prevent trafficking in human beings and smuggling of migrants.¹³ The EU is currently supporting the creation of a 'multipurpose centre' in Agadez, a major transit hub. It

¹⁰ EUR 24 million committed/planned in the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia and EUR 44 million committed/planned in Serbia.

¹¹ EUCAP SAHEL Niger supports the Nigerien authorities in the prevention, control and management of irregular migration flows through Niger and in particular Agadez.

¹² The EU's civilian CSDP mission in Mali (EUCAP Sahel Mali) supports the restructuring of the Malian domestic security forces (i.e. the police, the 'gendarmerie', and the 'garde nationale'). The objective is to help the Malian authorities ensure constitutional and democratic order and the conditions for lasting peace. The mission combines training activities and strategic advice.

¹³ In the framework of the EU's Comprehensive Approach (JOIN(2013) 30), CSDP missions will be articulated with development programmes in order to maximise overall efficiency.

will offer assistance and information to stranded migrants and support those who are willing to return or integrate in host communities.

The European Union is also active **in supporting the regional response against Boko Haram**, including supporting the Multinational Joint Task Force (MNJTF) and Niger, Chad, Cameroon and Nigeria. Further efforts will be pursued to address the humanitarian situation. **Nigeria** remains a major source of irregular migration in the European Union. The migration dialogue with Nigeria, in addition to cooperation in the fight against Boko Haram, is currently addressing readmission and returns.¹⁴

The European Union's efforts also aim to re-establish governance and stability in the **Central African Republic**.¹⁵ This includes support to the political process, economic recovery, and stabilisation with a military advisory mission. Further deterioration of the situation in the Central African Republic would gravely affect regional stability, the already severe humanitarian situation and could also result in displacements.

In **Somalia**, the European Union supports the reconstruction of a viable State and the re-establishment of a secure environment through the African Union Mission in Somalia¹⁶ and the EU military Training Mission. The EU development cooperation programme is lending massive support to stabilisation, state-building and development in Somalia under the New Deal.

The lack of economic perspectives and human rights' violations are push factors for emigration from **Eritrea**. In 2014, 36,990 Eritreans applied for international protection in the European Union. A quarter of a million have sought refuge in Ethiopia and Sudan. The EU is currently reviewing how best to work with Eritrea to address irregular migration. In December 2014, the Government of Eritrea announced that as of 1 January 2015 the duration of the national service, which was of indefinite duration, would be limited to eighteen months for new recruits. Monitoring of the implementation of this decision will be crucial, since the indefinite duration of the national service is a major push factor for migration. Dialogue with Eritrea is also pursued in the **Khartoum Process**, which allows the European Union to engage with all countries in the **Horn of Africa**. The Khartoum Process seeks to enhance regional cooperation on migration issues. **A new National Indicative Programme of EUR 200 million has been negotiated for Eritrea, with a focus on economic development, employment and governance.**

More than 2 million persons have fled their homes in **South Sudan**. The EU and its Member States have provided more than EUR 377 million in humanitarian assistance since 2014. The EU also financially and politically supports the Intergovernmental Authority on Development-led process and the mechanism to monitor compliance with the end of

¹⁴ A Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility was signed with Nigeria in 2015 covering cooperation on legal migration, irregular migration, migration and development and international protection.

¹⁵ To this end, the European Union together with France, Germany and the Netherlands, created the Bêkou Trust Fund in 2014.

¹⁶ AMISOM: <http://amisom-au.org/>

hostilities. The EU has also supported the efforts of the African Union and the United Nations to end the conflicts in Sudan which continue destabilise that country.

The conflict in **Yemen** has also an impact on the Horn of Africa as it hosts over 250,000 registered refugees from the region, 95% of them from Somalia. The EU has played an active role in supporting the transition since 2011 and is now fully engaged in the international efforts to seek a political solution to the crisis in Yemen.

Many African countries, particularly in the Horn of Africa, such as Ethiopia, Sudan and Kenya, and in Lake Chad host large refugee communities very often leading to protracted situations. Existing development programmes and humanitarian aid already provide support linking relief reconstruction and development. Strengthening the resilience is therefore key.

The European Commission and the High Representative will continue working towards finding durable solutions to prevent and unlock protracted displacement. Without development opportunities, tensions between populations can lead to the destabilisation of entire regions instigating massive secondary movements, including to Europe. By contrast, ensuring refugees and internally displaced persons become economic contributors reduces their economic impacts and costs and contributes to growth, beneficial to both the displaced and their hosts.

The European Commission will come forward with a new, development-oriented approach towards forced displacement, which will be implemented alongside humanitarian assistance from the outset of a crisis. Pilot projects have been launched this year for North Africa and the Horn of Africa. Following the example of the Middle East Regional Development and Protection Programmes, two other such protection programmes, for North Africa and for the Horn of Africa have been launched this year.

- **The United Nations and the broader international community**

This crisis is not only a European but a major international challenge. Cooperation with key international partners and with the United Nations, in particular UNHCR and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) as well as with organisations such as the International Organisation for Migration (IOM), is essential. UNHCR has special responsibilities in addressing the refugee crisis. The EU is further reinforcing cooperation with UNHCR in order to improve the effectiveness of its support to countries hosting large refugee populations, and the management of flows within the European Union. The EU is also engaging with other international partners which have strong capabilities, including within the Middle-Eastern region, in its efforts to increase the overall assistance and resettlement opportunities to persons in need of international protection.

Cooperation in readmission and return of irregular migrants

An effective policy of return of migrants, who have entered the territory of a host country irregularly and do not qualify for international protection, is a necessary component of a coherent EU strategy to discourage irregular migration. At present, percentages of return in

EU Member States are relatively low. In 2014, less than 40% of the irregular migrants that were ordered to leave the EU departed effectively.

Article 13 of the Cotonou Partnership Agreement with African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) countries, provides the legal basis to engage jointly on return and readmission of ACP nationals. The EU is determined to enhance cooperation with African partners towards an effective implementation of readmission schemes.

In addition to full implementation of existing readmission agreements¹⁷ and speedy conclusion of on-going negotiations¹⁸, efforts will concentrate on **practical cooperation measures** on return, including enhanced development of assisted voluntary return schemes. In this respect, the **recently agreed pilot project on return to Pakistan and Bangladesh** will offer important experience on the way forward. The European Union needs to increase its action to encourage returns of irregular migrants along the routes. **EU support for the creation of a multipurpose centre in Agadez serves this purpose.**

The EU Action Plan on Return¹⁹, adopted in parallel to this Communication, addresses this area of policy.

Fighting organised crime responsible for migrant smuggling and human trafficking

Tackling criminal networks is an essential part of the European Union's effort to save lives and prevent the exploitation of migrants. Enhancing international cooperation between police and justice systems of countries of origin and destination, as well as with relevant EU agencies and Member States is crucial. In many countries, this will require supporting the development of police, justice and border management capabilities.

The European Union is a key actor when it comes to improving partner countries' capacities on border management, and on implementing voluntary return and reintegration, taking an integrated approach which ensures borders are secure but at the same time allows swift movements of legitimate flows of people and goods.

The European Agenda on Migration sets out a number of initiatives to strengthen EU instruments available to address smuggling networks, notably an EU Action Plan against Migrant Smuggling.²⁰ Migration liaison officers and security experts deployed in key EU delegations will contribute to cooperation on these matters. A number of CSDP operations and missions are already playing an important role in the fight against organised crime.

The European Union Naval Force Mediterranean (**EUNAVFOR MED**) is a **crisis management operation** to provide surveillance, intelligence gathering and potential

¹⁷ Currently 17 readmission agreements are in force: Hong Kong, Macao, Sri Lanka, Albania, Russia, Ukraine, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia, Moldova, Pakistan, Georgia, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Turkey and Cape Verde.

¹⁸ Negotiations are ongoing with Morocco and Tunisia.

¹⁹ COM(2015) 453

²⁰ COM(2015) 285 final

operational engagement against smuggling activity in the Southern Central Mediterranean in full respect of international law.²¹

EUCAP Sahel Niger is in the process of being reinforced to enable it to support the Nigerien authorities to control irregular migration flows through Niger and in particular Agadez.²² The enlarged mandate of the mission will principally aim at: (i) strengthening the Nigerien legal framework on migration, border control and the fight against criminal activities related to irregular migration; (ii) building the capacities of the Nigerien security services in charge of border management, migration control and the fight against organised crime; and (iii) improving the efficiency of the judiciary. **EUCAP Sahel Mali** is already indirectly contributing to the prevention of irregular migration, training the internal security forces. It reached its full operational capacity in August 2015. A similar expansion of its mandate, as in Niger, is currently being studied. Other initiatives and CSDP missions in other countries in the Sahel and in the Horn of Africa are also being considered, in coordination with Member States' bilateral actions.

IV. Conclusions and way forward

In order to address the refugee crisis and manage challenges and opportunities jointly, the ability of the European Union to engage with partners in third countries will be key. The EU-Africa Migration, Mobility and Employment Partnership, the Rabat and Khartoum Processes, the Prague and Budapest Processes²³, the Union for the Mediterranean, the Silk Routes Partnership for Migration, the Eastern Partnership, or the ACP-EU migration dialogue are instrumental in this regard.

Several of the challenges outlined in this Communication can and are being addressed through political and diplomatic efforts. First and foremost, renewed efforts are being devoted to address the root causes of this crisis, namely the war in Syria and Iraq. The High Representative is pursuing high-level dialogues on these issues, as requested by the European Council, leveraging the European Union's support to countries and regions and building on already existing partnerships.

Cooperation with countries of origin and transit is being conducted at bilateral level using all existing frameworks; in particular those provided by **Mobility Partnerships**²⁴, the **Common Agenda on Migration and Mobility** or **readmission agreements**. Engagement on other

²¹ Council Decision (CFSP) 2015/778 of 18 May 2015 on a European Union military operation in the Southern Central Mediterranean (EUNAVFOR MED) (OJ No L 122, p. 31, 19.5.2015).

²² The opening of a field office in Agadez will provide the mission with an increased understanding of the migration flows and related issues, as well as with the possibility to work on a daily basis with the authorities who are responsible for managing the migration flows.

²³ The Budapest Process brings together countries from East and Central Asia to South-East and Western Europe.

²⁴ Mobility Partnerships offer a comprehensive framework for bilateral cooperation on mobility, migration and asylum issues. Seven Partnerships have been signed so far with: Cape Verde, the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Armenia, Morocco, Azerbaijan and Tunisia.

issues, including trade and development, will also be seized to discuss cooperation in the field of migration.

EU Delegations will also intensify contacts with local authorities. Delegations in key countries of transit and origin are being reinforced through the deployment of **European Migration Liaison Officer (EULMOs)**, as foreseen in the European Agenda on Migration.

In addition, the European Union is organising two high-level conferences as mandated by the **European Council of June 2015**:

1. **The Valletta Summit on Migration** (11-12 November 2015) will bring together the leaders of European and key African countries, notably those who are party to the Khartoum and the Rabat Processes, as well as the African Union Commission and the Economic Community of West African States' Commission. The summit will discuss, *inter alia*, development benefits of migration, root causes, legal migration and mobility, international protection and asylum, prevention and fight against migrant smuggling and trafficking of human beings, and cooperation on return and readmission.

2. **The high-level Conference on Eastern Mediterranean/Western Balkans route** (autumn 2015) will bring together EU Member States, Western Balkan countries and Turkey in order to discuss refugee and migrant flows transiting through the Eastern Mediterranean/Western Balkan routes.

For many years, the European Union has addressed refugee and migratory challenges through its external action, combining political, development and humanitarian assistance tools. Today's refugee crisis is an acute manifestation of longstanding and complex problems; the roots of the crisis are manifold and will not be solved immediately. Comprehensively addressing these will require an approach that encompasses short- and long-term efforts. Most importantly, solidarity and responsibility will be essential and the different instruments at the Union's disposal, from diplomacy to financial assistance will have to act jointly.

The European Commission and the High Representative call on Member States to show determination when addressing the plight of refugees and the problems that push people to leave their countries. Solidarity, responsibility and unity are necessary to live up to the legal, institutional and moral obligations that the European Union faces today.